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2009 Annual Report

Message from the President and Founder:

It is an honor and a privilege to have been one of the nine women who sat around a table at Cape Organization for the Rights of the Disabled nine years ago in November in the final planning stages of the Associated Advocacy Center. We are the only nonprofit organization in Massachusetts who diligently provides education and court advocacy, services, programs and community organizing for and with the families of children whose education is not honored by society; with knowledge, understanding, drive, determination, and most of all vision for their future.

We are here to help a child become an adult and, as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 states, “to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living and to ensure that the rights of children with disabilities and parents of such children are protected.”

You might ask why, if there is a law mandating this happens, our organization is needed? I’m going to tell you it’s because 84 percent of the children in juvenile lock up are children who have a disability, but that only 12 percent were actually being provided services prior to incarceration. I’ll also say that we have worked with approximately fifteen hundred children across the commonwealth and watched as their parents became empowered with the knowledge to fight for their child’s rights. Our children are being provided an appropriate education because we have learned how to be effective and work in a corrupt education system that doesn’t want to acknowledge that all children deserve to be treated as equals to their typical peers. I’m going to tell you that it’s because Autism Spectrum Disorder is now 1 in every 94 children when just 19 years ago it was 1 in every 10,000 children and the expertise has not caught up with the need. No one is calling this a pandemic or coming up with a vaccine to keep children safe. We are here to SAVE THE CHILDREN, and through the challenges of this past year, we have emerged a stronger and more viable organization.

I thank you for all of your help and support over the year,



Toni Saunders

Educational Consultant

In December of 2008, through a partnership with the “Cape Cod Youth Empowerment Initiative” federal grant managed by the Donahue Institute, we were awarded \$9,800.00 for much needed technical assistance. With that grant, we purchased a new laptop and desktop computer, hired a Strategic Planner-Josh Arnold, a Financial Planner-Mark Watson; and a Grant Researcher/Board Developer-Doreen Lawrence. Together, with our strategic planning committee, they created a blue print for our future extending out for the next five years.

Capturing the most vital components of the strategic plan, we did a Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) analysis of the organization, which afforded us a much needed mirrored reflection of where we were in that snapshot in time so that we could establish a foundation upon which to build; creating goals and objectives, and identifying our immediate and long term needs. Our Financial Planner dug deeply into the financial roots of the organization analyzing the day to day operations and dividing the data into fundable programs that will ultimately create a more sustainable financial foundation upon which to eventually grow from a small organization with one office, to multi-offices, to multi-states, and then with vision, into a national organization. Because of this, we are currently in discussions with possible future foundational support to expand to Chicago IL. The Grant Researcher took vital information and presented a diverse funding stream targeted at different MA locations to increase our state grassroots outreach. She also helped to increase the Board of Directors’ knowledge and awareness of fundraising techniques and helped to invoke a broader sense of ownership working together to grow the organization financially.



The more financially stable this organization is, the more families we will impact, the more students we will save.

Graduation is the Goal!

Collaborations & Partnerships are at the cornerstone of philanthropy today.

Funders are now looking for “more bang for their buck” and because there are a multitude of organizations working with youth, there is no reason not to create and expand programs to help more students than ever before.

- **Cape Cod Youth Empowerment Initiative**

Provided free trainings to members; created opportunities to learn from and thus collaborate with other organizations on the cape; and granted federal dollars for technical assistance

- **Cape Cod Justice for Youth Collaborative**

United many Cape organizations and concerned citizens, spearheaded by retired Judge Joseph Reardon to create opportunities for community organizing, and strategic development of programs to target youth who are caught in the “Zero Tolerance” response to children being children and thus working to redirect the “School to Prison Pipeline”

- **Community Change Inc.**

Partnering to bring white privilege awareness to the community with the mission to create community leaders in the fight for equality

- **Cape & Islands Gay Straight Youth Alliance**

Collaborating on youth programs with a special focus on defining, creating an understanding, and eradicating prejudice and privilege with a strong analysis of how we each contribute to and perpetuate the constructs of the “isms” in our society

- **The New England Diagnostic & Learning Center**

Partnering to provide parents with a reputable alternative for independent psychological and educational evaluations with an emphasis on efficient, timely, and accurate reporting of a student’s educational needs

- **The Garrett Pressley Autism Resource Center**

Partnering and collaborating on grants that offer trainings to urban parents and guardians of children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

- **The Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race & Justice at Harvard University**

Partnering to focus and organize the communities of people of color who are most affected by the disparaging statistics of the “School to Prison Pipeline” and incarceration outcomes answering the question, “What are we going to do about the education of our children in the community?” Called Re-V-solution to show the parallel between the need for a revolution, but being constructive coming up with solutions to the problem.

- **Pyramid Builders, Inc.**

Collaborating with a mental health clinic to provide the “Disability Unit” of their Brockton office, trainings for their parents, and advocacy to the children of their clients; in return they’ve offered us a conference room and office space to do trainings and meet with clients.

- **Manor House (Private School for Autism)**

Partnership to create a space for parents of children with autism to support one another in a safe atmosphere and to learn how to ensure an appropriate education for their child

Impact and Reach

Statistics 2009

- I. Community Organizing: Increased our organizing effort in 3 new locations.
- II. Families Served: 135
- III. Students Served: 149
- IV. Court Involved Students/Incarcerated: 4/1
- V. Minority Percentage: 41%
- VI. Full Pay: 38%
- VII. Sliding Scale: 60%
- VIII. Free: 2%
- IX. Hours worked: 4368/8736
- X. Advocates Certified: 2/6
- XI. Number of Empowerment Trainings Provided: 6
- XII. Number of New Parents and Guardians Trained: 72

Programs

I. ADVOCACY

Providing educational advocacy in schools and courts to parents; and students ages 3-26

II. RECORDS ASSESSMENTS

Providing full records assessments for student to parents full and half pay

III. TRAINING

Providing training programs to parents for empowerment through knowledge, learning strategies for teaching their child, about disabilities, and laws

Providing training programs to students for transition ages 14-26 pre-post secondary education/vocation

Providing training programs to organizations and schools regarding laws, and disabilities

Providing training programs to students within the schools regarding disabilities and privilege

Providing training programs to adults who want to become advocates

NEW!

- ▶ Providing training programs to those who need to learn the American Education and Court systems
- ▶ Providing training programs for new mothers and soon to be mothers “What Happens If?”
- ▶ Putting special needs youth to work: creating the venues for sustainable employment for youth with learning challenges.

New this year:



Mass Youth Voice has

expanded their vision to expand their reach. The youth board decided to seek separate program funding to provide leadership development so they can learn self advocacy skills; to combat the disparaging statistics of bullying being perpetrated on many students with special needs; to organize around their disparaging statistics of not passing and therefore not being able to receive a diploma and thus not have the ability to go to college, get a good paying job, have quality of life. They have also expressed a desire to teach green awareness to their peers while working together as in their communities to create projects and volunteer opportunities. They are currently developing a website and Facebook internet presence, as well as other forms of media.



The Light on Education is a cable television talk show featuring current event issues affecting education in MA. It is hosted by Toni Saunders, and each week there will be guest speakers on specific topics such as, Autism, personal experiences in the education system and outcomes. At the end of the interview, there is time for “Ask the Advocate” where people write or email questions to be answered on the air. The DVD’s will be taxied to all of the cable television stations in MA and a schedule will be created on the web so that you know when and where it will be aired. The intro and extro were created and produced by “Love Light Laughter Productions” Los Angeles CA, and filmed by “Grace Ministries Multi-media”. Both are collaborating with

AAC to create a documentary on “White Privilege”, and “Bullying in Schools” to be aired on our website through U-Tube.



LOVE LIGHT LAUGHTER PRODUCTIONS

Our web presence is changing! CScale Designs has designed a new look to be more corporate, the new site will launch in January to begin a new year with a face looking toward the future.



In our vision to

expand to new sites in MA, we obtained space at a new location 540 Main St. Hyannis MA. 02601. There we can hold trainings, small conferences, fundraisers, board meetings, and meet with clients in a professional atmosphere. We are currently negotiating with Challenger Club, Inc. to create a Center in Osterville at the newly closed elementary school. Our agreement, if we choose to sign, will be a lease for a specific amount of time and renegotiated yearly. We are also being given free meeting space for trainings, small conferences, and meeting with clients in Brockton with Pyramid Builders, Inc. Lastly in the future, we are hoping to open an advocacy center in collaborations with other disability organizations to be a one stop disability shop for families of children with special needs to acquire a multitude of services and attend programs renovating a building to make it fully green. We have asked Maria Shriver if she would allow us to use her mother's name to call the center the "Eunice Kennedy Shriver Disability Center". We have not yet heard a yes or no.



Grants Obtained 2009

<u>Foundation</u>	<u>Funds</u>
Cape Cod Youth Empowerment Initiative	\$9,800.00
Haymarket People's Fund	\$4,000.00
Maximus Inc.	\$2,500.00

In conclusion, we have come a long way since we opened our doors eight years ago. We've gone through starvation and growing pains and we persevered. This is the first year we've shown the ability to really pull together resources and people power, and now things are really beginning to work. Let's make the growth of the Associated Advocacy Center a strategic force in the outcomes of children who have traditionally been marginalized and oppressed in society. Let's continue to work with other organizations that will help us expand our vision and our reach to our most vulnerable youth in our society, and continue to instill empowerment in the people who are affected by the disparaging statistics. The only way to make change in this world is to pick one thing that you wish to change, and then go do it. We have chosen to **SAVE THE**

CHILDREN.

